

**HARLAN ELLISON'S**

ADULTS  
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# Chocolate Alphabet





# A NOTE ON HOW THIS STORY CAME TO BE WRITTEN

—BY HARLAN ELLISON—

EIGHT YEARS AGO, LETTING MY MIND IDLE ONE DAY, I TYPED UP A GROUP OF TITLES I THOUGHT ONE DAY I'D LIKE TO WRITE STORIES AROUND. ONE OF THEM WAS "THE CHOCOLATE ALPHABET." I HAD NO IDEA WHAT THAT MEANT; IT JUST SOUNDED GOOD. I TYPED 10 TITLES IN ALL ON THAT PIECE OF PAPER, OVER 8 YEARS I WROTE 9 OF THE 10 STORIES. "THE CHOCOLATE ALPHABET" WAS THE LAST TITLE ON THAT SHEET. THE PAPER WAS TORN OFF AS I WROTE EACH STORY, UNTIL ALL I HAD LEFT WAS A YELLOWING CORNER OF PAPER WITH THOSE 3 WORDS ON IT. FADE OUT; FADE IN: 2 YEARS AGO I WAS VISITED BY SAN FRANCISCO UNDERGROUND COMIX MAGNATE **RON TURNER** & THE EXTRAORDINARY ARTIST **LARRY TODD**. YOU WILL REMEMBER TODD AS THE MAN WHO WORKED WITH THE LATE **VAUGHN BODE** ON SO MANY PROJECTS, AND AS THE MAN WHO DEVELOPED HIS OWN REMARKABLE TALENT, AND WHO IS NOW CONSIDERED ONE OF AMERICA'S PREMIER VISUAL TECHNICIANS. THEY VISITED FOR THE DAY, AND ASKED ME IF I WOULD WRITE AN 8 PAGE COMIC STORY TO BE USED IN ONE OF THE BOOKS LARRY WAS DOING FOR **RON AT LAST GASPECO-FUNNIES**. AS LARRY WAS THE MAN WHO CREATED THE DYNAMITE STRIP "DR. ATOMIC," I SAID I'D BE PLEASED TO TAKE A STAB AT IT. LARRY THEN GAVE ME A FOUR-COLOR PAINTING AND SUGGESTED I WRITE THE STORY AROUND IT. (YOU WILL FIND THAT SEGMENT OF THE **CHOCOLATE ALPHABET** I WROTE TO GO WITH THE COVER AS **N IS FOR NEMOTROPIN**) THE TITLE OF LARRY'S PAINTING WAS "2 NEMOTROPIN" (IT IS THE BACK COVER)

WELL, ONE THING AND ANOTHER HAPPENED, AND THE COVER PAINTING STOOD AGAINST THE WALL IN MY OFFICE FOR 2 YEARS, AND I NEVER WROTE THE STORY. FADE OUT; FADE IN: FIVE OR 6 MONTHS AGO, I OFFERED TO TRY SOMETHING THAT HAD NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE.... I LIKE DOING THAT KIND OF THING... IT UPSETS PEOPLE. WHAT I OFFERED TO DO WAS TO SIT IN THE FRONT WINDOW OF A BOOKSTORE FOR A FULL WEEK, AND ATTEMPT TO WRITE A COMPLETE STORY EACH DAY FOR 6 DAYS. THE STORE I OFFERED TO DO THIS GIG FOR IS A FAMOUS S-F SHOP IN L.A., **A CHANGE OF HOBBIT**: (1371 WESTWOOD BLVD. (213-GRE-ATSF)) OWNED AND OPERATED BY **SHERY GOTTGLIEB** AND A STAFF OF BRIGHT, ENTHUSIASTIC YOUNG S-F FAN. THE PROMOTIONAL GIMMICK WAS THAT ANYONE WHO BOUGHT OVER \$10 WORTH OF BOOKS ON ANY GIVEN DAY THAT I WAS IN THE WINDOW, WOULD GET AN AUTOGRAPHED COPY OF THAT DAY'S STORY. 6 DAYS, 6 STORIES, \$60 WORTH OF MERCHANDISE. GIFT CERTIFICATES COULD BE PURCHASED AGAINST FUTURE MERCHANDISE. ON THE 6TH DAY, **SHERY** SCHEDULED A BIG AUTOGRAPH PARTY AT WHICH ALL 6 OF THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS WOULD BE OFFERED FOR AUCTION. THE STORIES WERE BOUND TOGETHER WITH WHATEVER SOURCE MATERIAL HAD FIRST PROMPTED ME TO THINK OF EACH STORY, AND THE ENTIRE PACKAGE WOULD GO TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER, PROCEEDS TO HELP SUPPORT THE STORE. (WE HERE IN L.A. WHO WORK IN THE GENRE FEEL VERY PROTECTIVE ABOUT **A CHANGE OF HOBBIT**, AND WE LIKE TO HELP OUT WHEN WE CAN.) THE FIRST DAY I WROTE A 300 WORD STORY TITLED "STRANGE WINE" WHICH APPEARED IN THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE OF **AMAZING STORIES**. THAT WAS MONDAY, FEB. 23. AS I PREPARED TO LEAVE MY HOME FOR THE STORE, ON TUESDAY FEB 24, WITH NO IDEA WHAT I WOULD WRITE THAT DAY, I SAW THE PAINTING **LARRY TODD** HAD LEFT WITH ME 2 YEARS BEFORE. FLASH-BACK: 2 WEEKS EARLIER, L.A. HAD HAD THE WORST RAINSTORM IN YEARS, AFTER MANY MONTHS OF DROUGHT. BECAUSE I WAS HAVING AN ADDITION TO MY OFFICE BUILT, AND BECAUSE THEY HAD RIPPED OUT THE FOOTING AROUND MY OFFICE (WHICH IS IN MY HOME) SO THEY COULD BREAK OUT A WALL TO EXTEND THE ROOM, MY OFFICE WAS FLOODED AND EVERYTHING RESTING ON THE CARPET WAS SOAKED. THE PAINTING WAS ONE OF THOSE ITEMS. SO I WANTED TO WRITE THE STORY AND GET THE PAINTING... (SEE INSIDE BACK COVER)



FROM A TO Z IN THE CHOCOLATE ALPHABET IS ©1978 BY HARLAN ELLISON ★ ARTWORK IS ©1978 BY LARRY S. TODD. THIS BOOK IS PUBLISHED BY LAST GASPECO-FUNNIES, Box 212, BERKELEY, CALIF. 94701 ★ RON TURNER ~ EDITOR



# IS FOR ATLANTEAN

THEIR SCIENCE PREDICTED THE QUAKE. THERE HAD BEEN 2 CENTURIES OF WARNING TREMBLORS. WITH THE AID OF GENETIC ENGINEERING THEY BEGAN A RETURN TO THE OCEAN. IT WOULD NOT BE A LOST CONTINENT, IT WOULD BE AN ABANDONED CONTINENT. AND THROUGHOUT THE AGES THAT FOLLOWED HUMANKIND WOULD SEARCH FOR LOST ATLANTIS, NEVER REALIZING THAT WHEN THE EARTH SPLIT AND THE FIRES OF THE UNDERWORLD SEARED THE LAND, THE ATLANTEANS WOULD HAVE ALREADY DEVELOPED GILL BREATHING AND USEFUL MEMBRANES. SEE, THEN: KRENOA, CAPITAL CITY OF UNDERSEA ATLANTIS. SNUG AND SECURE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE MARACOT DEEP. TOWERS OF PORPHYRY AND ADAMANTINE, LIT WITH LAMBERT FLAMES FROM WITHIN; WALLS OF SEAWEEDS AND KELPS, ALTERED BY CHEMICAL MEANS TO RETAIN THEIR FLEXIBILITY, YET BE SUITABLE FOR BUILDINGS; FLYING BRIDGES AND CAUSEWAYS ALL HOLLOW AND SHIMMERING. KRENOA, BEAUTIFUL BEYOND BELIEF?

AND LYING IN A PUBLIC SQUARE, AN ENORMOUS LEAD CANNISTER, SPLIT OPEN AND HOLDING DARKNESS. AN ALIEN OBJECT DROPPED INTO KRENOA FROM ABOVE...

SEE, NOW: THE ATLANTEANS. PALE BLUE AND GREAT-EYED, GENTLE EXPRESSIONS AND WISDOM IN THEIR OPEN, STARING, DEAD EYES. WHAT GOD AND NATURE COULD NOT DESTROY...

THE INHERITORS OF THE EARTH DID.





## IS FOR BREATHDEATH

IT'S WAITING FOR THEM WHEN THEY REACH SPACE. IT GROWS ON VIRTUALLY EVERY WORLD BUT THE EARTH. IT IS AS COMMON AS WEED. THE LITTLE BLACK FLOWER WITH THE SOFT RED BULB IN ITS CENTER. ITS SPORES FILL THE ATMOSPHERES OF GRAY PLANETS CIRCLING YELLOW STARS AND BURNED-OUT CINDERS. WHEN THE LAST OF THE ATMOSPHERE HAS BEEN DRAWN OFF INTO SPACE, THE SPORES WILL SETTLE. BUT THEY WILL STILL KILL. IT IS A LOVELY FLOWER. IF ONE STARES INTO THE CENTER ONE CAN SEE /MANY, DISTURBING THINGS. UNTIL THE ANEURISMS STOP THE VISIONS AND THE BLOOD BURSTS FORTH...

THERE IS A RACE ON A FAR STAR THAT BELIEVES THE BREATHDEATH CAN BE GROUND UP AND CUT WITH VARIOUS JUICES AND CONSUMED. AND IT WILL GIVE ETERNAL LIFE. NO ONE HAS EVER TRIED THE RECIPE....







## IS FOR CUSHIO

WHEN HE WAS TEN, HE WAS SAVAGED BY A FOREST CREATURE THEY HAD THOUGHT EXTINCT THOUSANDS OF YEARS BEFORE. THEY KILLED THE BEAST AND PUT IT ON DISPLAY IN THE LARGEST MUSEUM OF THEIR WORLD. THE BOY WAS TAKEN TO REGENERATION AND THEY REBUILT HIM WITH MACHINE PARTS AND SOFT THINGS THAT HAD BEEN FLESH IN OTHER BODIES. HE GREW UP HALF-HUMAN AND THUS NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHAT HUMANS WANTED. HE KILLED HIS FIRST WHEN HE WAS 15. BY HIS 21ST YEAR HE RULED THE CONTINENT WITH A GUARD OF MERCENARIES AS RUTHLESS AS HIMSELF. HE WENT INTO SPACE WITH AN ARMADA AT THE AGE OF THIRTY AND LEFT BEHIND A ROUTE OF ROAD-MARKERS THAT HAD BEEN LIVES AND CITIES AND THRIVING MARKETS. THE ROUTE OF MASS GRAVES. THEY STOPPED HIM NEAR ALDEBARAN, AND SPACE WAS LITTERED WITH WRECKAGE BEYOND THE RANGE OF THE MOST SENSITIVE SENSORS. THEY TOOK HIM ALIVE, AND THEY ENCASED HIM IN AMBER AND THEY IMBEDDED HIM IN THE EARTH OF THE HOMELAND WITH CAMERAS THAT NEVER SHUT DOWN AND NEVER LEFT HIM OUT OF THEIR SIGHT, AND THERE HE STAYED FOREVER!

THE REGENERATORS OF HIS WORLD HAD DONE THEIR WORK WELL. HE WOULD LIVE FOREVER, AND MOTHERS OF THE HOMELAND WHO DESIRED THEIR CHILDREN TO GO TO SLEEP, INVOKED THE NAME OF CUSHIO. THEY SAID: "CUSHIO WILL TAKE YOU IF YOU DON'T DO GOOD." AND THE CHILDREN WERE TOO YOUNG TO KNOW THAT COULD NEVER BE....





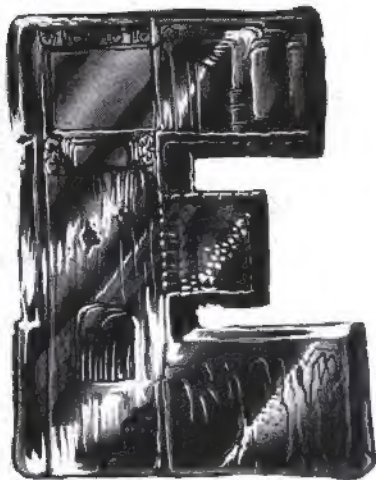


## IS FOR DIKH

HE IS SICK. HE WRITES HIS BOOKS IN THE LOWEST LEVEL OF A DEEP LABYRINTHINE GROTTO. HIS BOOKS ARE FILLED WITH THINGS NO ONE EVER WANTED TO KNOW. UNSETTLING THINGS. HE BECAME PART MUSHROOM MANY YEARS AGO, BUT EVEN THE SMALL LIZARDS WHO COME AND FEED OFF HIS BODY NEVER REALIZE HE WAS ONCE A MAN. IF HE WERE ON A DESERT ISLAND HE WOULD WRITE HIS AWFUL STORIES AND SEND THEM OUT IN BOTTLES. BUT THERE, DEEP IN THE GROTTO, NO ONE WILL EVER READ A WORD HE HAS WRITTEN; WRITTEN WITH SHARDS OF SHARP STONE IN THE BLOOD OF LIZARDS; WRITTEN ON WALLS THAT GO DEEP INTO THE EARTH. BUT ONE DAY THEY WILL NEED FOSSIL FUELS, AND THEY WILL BREAK THROUGH THE WALL OF HIS GROTTO, AND THEY WILL FIND THE BOOKS, WRITTEN ON ENDLESS WALLS. AND THEY WILL FIND THE THING WITH A TORMENTED FACE, GROWING IN THE MOIST SOIL OF THE UNDERWORLD.

## ELEVATOR PEOPLE

THEY NEVER SPEAK, AND THEY CANNOT MEET YOUR GAZE. THERE ARE 500 BUILDINGS IN THE U.S. WHOSE ELEVATORS GO DEEPER THAN THE BASEMENT. WHEN YOU HAVE PRESSED THE "B" BUTTON AND REACHED BOTTOM, YOU MUST PRESS IT TWICE MORE. THE ELEVATOR DOORS WILL CLOSE AND YOU WILL HEAR THE SOUND OF SPECIAL RELAYS BEING THROWN, AND THE ELEVATOR WILL DESCEND INTO THE CAVERNS. CHANCE HAS NOT LOOKED FAVORABLY ON OCCASIONAL VOYAGERS IN THOSE 500 CAGES. THEY HAVE PRESSED THE WRONG BUTTON TOO MANY TIMES. THEY HAVE BEEN SEIZED BY THOSE WHO SHUFFLE THROUGH THE CAVERNS, AND THEY HAVE BEEN... TREATED. NOW THEY RIDE THE CAGES. THEY NEVER SPEAK, AND THEY CANNOT MEET YOUR GAZE. THEY STARE AT THE NUMBERS AS THEY LIGHT AND THEN GO OFF RIDING UP & DOWN EVEN AFTER NIGHT HAS FALLEN. THEIR CLOTHES ARE CLEAN. THERE IS A SPECIAL DRY-CLEANER WHO DOES THE WORK. ONCE, YOU SAW ONE OF THEM, AND HER EYES WERE FILLED WITH SCREAMS. LONDON IS A CITY FILLED WITH NARROW, SECURE STAIRWAYS.



## IS FOR FLENSER

AMONG ALL THE PARANORMALS, THE FLENSERS ARE THE MOST KIND. THEY READ MINDS, THEY ARE EMPATHIC, AND THEY SEE ALL THE ANGUISH IN THOSE THEY PASS. THEY WIPE CLEAN THE SLATES OF THE MINDS THEY ENCOUNTER. AND FOR THIS, THEY SUFFER A GREAT ISOLATION. THEY ARE THE PALE PEOPLE WHOSE SOCKS FALL DOWN THE ONES YOU SEE STANDING ON STREET CORNERS. THEIRS IS A TERRIBLE LONELY EXISTENCE. EVERY DAY THEY CRUCIFY THEMSELVES.

BE KIND TO THE PALE OLD LADIES AND THE MUMBING, SCRAWNY BOYS YOU PASS IN THE DRUG STORE.

THEY MAY SAVE YOU FROM THE TERRORS OF YOUR PAST.







## WIS FOR GOLEM

THE GOLEM ARE GOYIM THAT ALWAYS WANTED TO BE JEWISH. BUT THEY NEVER SUFFERED ENOUGH GUILT.



## IS FOR HAMADRYAD

THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY HAS THREE DEFINITIONS OF HAMADRYAD. THE FIRST IS: A WOOD NYMPH THAT LIVES AND DIES IN HER TREE. THE SECOND IS: A VENOMOUS, HOODED SERPENT OF INDIA. THE THIRD DEFINITION IS IMPROBABLE. NONE OF THEM MENTION THE MYTHIC ORIGINS OF THE WORD.

THE TREE IN WHICH THE SERPENT LIVED WAS THE HAMADRYAD. EVE WAS POISONED.

THE WOOD OF WHICH THE CROSS WAS MADE WAS OF THE HAMADRYAD. JESUS DID NOT RISE, HE NEVER DIED.

THE ARK WAS COMPOSED OF LOGS OF LUMBER FROM THE HAMADRYAD. YOU WILL FIND NO SIGN OF THE VESSEL ON TOP OF MT. ARARAT. IT SANK.





## IS FOR ICE-CRAWLER

WHEN THE EXIT FROM THE POLAR ICECAP HAD BEEN SEALED BY NUKES AND THERMITE, A FEW OF THEM MANAGED TO ESCAPE. THEY WERE TRACKED BY LAND AND BY AIR, BUT THEIR THICK WHITE SKINS CONCEALED THEM FROM ALL BUT CHANCE DISCOVERY. WITH THE END OF THE SUPPLY OF GOOD SKINS, THE FASHION DIED QUICKLY AND THE RETURN OF STRIPPED CORDUROY AND VELOUR SOON FOLLOWED. THOSE THAT HAD ESCAPED FOUND CHANNELS IN THE PERMAFROST AND TRIED TO RETURN TO THEIR LAND. THEY HAD NEVER KNOWN VIOLENCE, IT HAD COME TO THEM SLOWLY, ONLY AS A DESPERATE LAST MEASURE; AND ONLY A FEW



HAD LEARNED THE LESSON WELL ENOUGH TO CRAWL BACK TO THEIR BLASTED DOMAIN. THE HUNTING PARTIES THAT HAD COME AFTER THEM HAD SLAUGHTERED HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS BEFORE THERE HAD BEEN THE SLIGHTEST RETALIATION. AT FIRST THEY BELIEVED THE WARM PEOPLE FROM THE LIGHT HAD COME TO ESTABLISH RELATIONS. BUT WHEN THEIR PIPING LANGUAGE FELL ON DEAF EARS AND THE HARPOONS WERE THROWN, THEY KNEW THEY HAD BEEN DISCOVERED TO THEIR ULTIMATE UNDOING. THOSE WHO SURVIVED CRAWLED BACK AND ATE BURROWS FOR THEIR DEAD.

THEN THEY SLITHERED AWAY FROM THAT PLACE TO A DEEPER LEVEL, AND BEGAN TO BREED. THEY WOULD TEACH THEIR CHILDREN WHAT THEY HAD LEARNED. AND PERHAPS ONE DAY THEY WOULD WEAR FASHIONABLE SKINS IN FOUR OR FIVE DIFFERENT COLORS....





INDIA CONCEALS MANY SECRETS. IN THE HINDU KOSH THERE IS A MONASTERY FAR BACK IN THE LOW MOUNTAINS WHERE A SECT OF MONKS WORSHIP THE LAST JABBERWOCK. IT IS A FEARSOME CREATURE: MUCH SMALLER THAN ONE WOULD EXPECT FROM READING "ALICE". IT HAS BATWINGS WHOSE MEMBRANES BETWEEN THE STRUTS ARE ALL TATTERED AND TORN. IT IS DEEP RED IN COLOR AND COVERED WITH BRISTLY FUR FROM ITS SHOULDERS TO ITS BUTTOCKS. IT RESEMBLES A BAT-



EARED WINGED JACKAL WITH INCREDIBLY SHARP TEETH, AND ONE GOOD EYE. THE OTHER EYE HAS TWO PUPILS, AND IS A MOST MALEVOLENT THING TO BEHOLD. ITS CLAWS CAN TEAR ROCK, AND IT SCREAMS CONSTANTLY. THE MONKS ARE THE HOLIEST OF HOLY MEN. THEY HAVE TRIED TO MATE THE JABBERWOCK TO PRESERVE ITS PRESENCE IN THEIR MIDST. THEY HAVE MATED IT WITH A PIG AND PRODUCED A THING THAT CAN NEITHER WALK NOR SEE. THEY HAVE MATED IT

## IS FOR JABBERWOCK

WITH A CAMEL AND BORN DEAD, BUT WOULD NOT DECAY. THEY MATED IT WITH SWANS, WITH IBIS, WITH AUKS AND WITH JACKALS. THE MONKS KEEP THE CHILDREN IN GLASS CAGES, BUT THEY SELDOM GO TO LOOK. THEY MATED IT WITH A YOUNG GIRL, A VIRGIN STOLEN FROM A SMALL VILLAGE. THE GIRL DIED BUT THE CHILD STILL LIVES. THEY MUST CHANGE THE SOFT CLOTH IN THE BOTTOM OF ITS NEST 3 TIMES A DAY.

THE OFFSPRING WAS



IT SWEATS BLOOD. THE HOLY MONKS HOPE THEY WILL BE ABLE TO FIND A MATE FOR THE JABBERWOCK BEFORE ANOTHER CENTURY PASSES. WHAT THEY DO NOT KNOW IS THAT THE JABBERWOCK HAS SENTIENCE, IT IS A THINKING, FEELING CREATURE FOR ALL ITS AWESOME MENACE. WHAT THEY DO NOT KNOW IS WHAT THE JABBERWOCK THINKS, WHAT IT WISHES.

THE JABBERWOCK WISHES IT WERE DEAD.





## IS FOR KENGHIS KAHN

HE WAS A VERY NICE PERSON. HISTORY HAS NO RECORD OF HIM. THERE IS A MORAL IN IT, SOMEWHERE.



## IS FOR LOUP-GAROU

HAD ŠAŠA NOVÁČEK'S PARENTS COME TO AMERICA FROM IRELAND OR SWEDEN OR EVEN POLAND, HE WOULD NOT HAVE RECOGNIZED THAT THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR WAS A WEREWOLF. BUT THEY HAD COME FROM OSTRAVA, IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, AND HE RECOGNIZED THE SHAPE OF THE NOSTRILS, THE HAIR IN THE PALMS OF HER HANDS WHEN SHE LOANED HIM A CUP OF NON-DAIRY CREAMER, THE DEFINITIVE S-CURVE OF THE SPINE AS SHE WALKED TO HANG HER LAUNDRY.

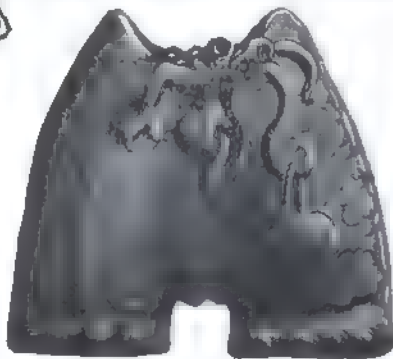
SO HE WAS READY. HE HAD BOUGHT A .306 HUNTING RIFLE AND HAD MELTED DOWN ENOUGH AMERICAN 25 CENT PIECES TO MAKE HIS OWN SILVER BULLETS. AND THE NIGHT OF THE FULL MOON, WHEN THE MADNESS WAS UPON HER, AND SHE BURST THROUGH THE KITCHEN WINDOW IN A SNARLING STRIKE OF FANGS AND FUR, HE WAS READY FOR HER. CALMLY, WITH FULL PRESENCE AND MURMURING THE NAMES OF THE BEST SAINTS, HE EMPTIED THE RIFLE INTO HER.

THE CORONER WAS UNABLE TO DESCRIBE THE CONDITION OF THE BODY ON A SINGLE FORM SHEET. THE COIN OF THE U.S.A., NOTABLY THE QUARTER, CONTAINS LESS THAN 1% PURE SILVER IN IT. TIMES CHANGE, BUT LEGENDS DO NOT.





IS FOR MUU-MUU



ONE SHOULD ALWAYS WEAR ONE IF ONE  
HAS MORE THAN SIX OR SEVEN ARMS...

SPARE CHANGE?

GO AWAY, UGLY MUTANT!  
AND GO BUY A MUU-MUU!





IRL AND ONKADJ WERE THE LAST TO ENTER THE TUNNEL OF FINAL DARKNESS. THE COMPETITION HAD BEEN MORE FIERCE THIS CONTEST THAN ANY NEMOTROPIN COULD REMEMBER. THE GLADIATORS HAD FALLEN, SPEARS IN THEIR THORACIC VITALS, MANDIBLES SHATTERED, EYESTALKS RIPPED OUT, CLAWS SLICED OFF, UNTIL ONLY IRL AND ONKADJ HAD SURVIVED. NOW THEY WERE CLOSED OFF IN THE TUNNEL TO DECIDE WHICH OF THEM WOULD SUFFER THE PENALTY.

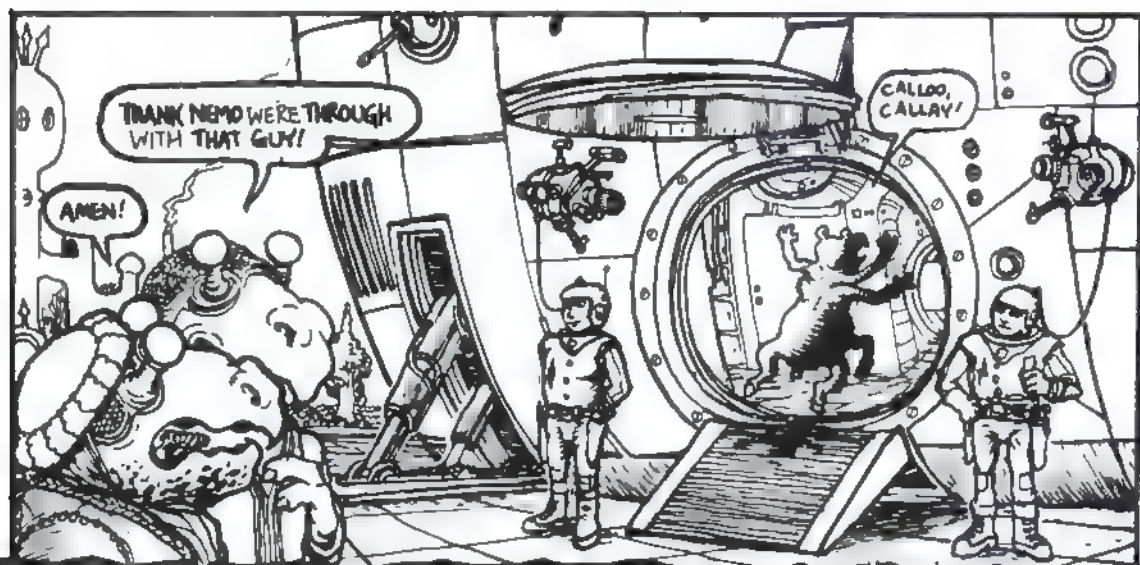
## IS FOR NEMOTROPIN



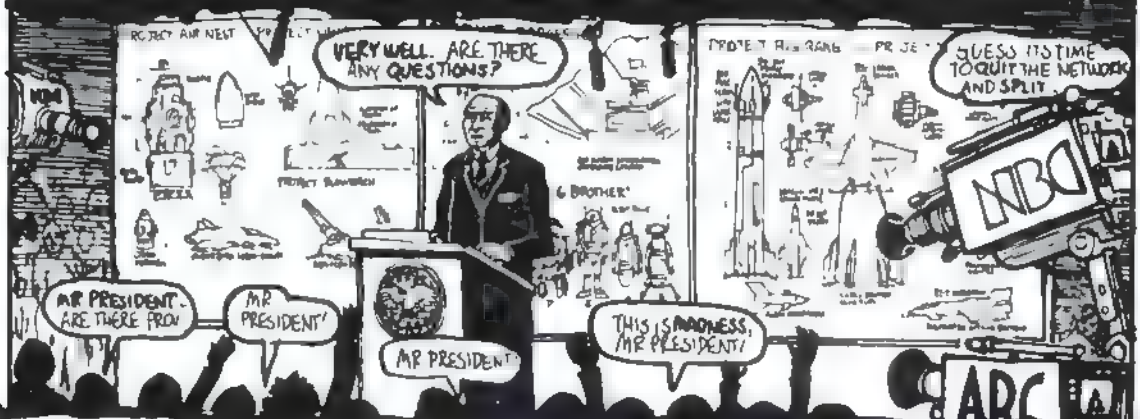
THE CONTEST AMONG THE NEMOTROPIN WAS THE ONLY WAY THEY HAD TO RID THEMSELVES OF UNDESIRABLES. AND AS THE NEMOTROPIN WERE UNIVERSALLY JUDGED THE MOST EVIL, WARLIKE RACE IN THE GALAXY, THE LEVEL OF UNDESIRABILITY WAS A Marvel EVEN TO THE MOST VICIOUS BRIGANDS AND HELLSTAINED MARAUDERS. THEY WERE FORCED TO PRODUCE EVERYTHING THEY NEEDED FOR THEIR OWN EXISTENCE; NO OTHER PLANET OR CONFEDERATION OF PLANETS WOULD...







... UNDERTAKE TO TRADE WITH THEM. THEY WERE STAKED OFF-LIMITS AND PERMITTED TO BREED AND KILL AND LIVE AS BEST THEY COULD. BUT THEY COULD NOT LEAVE THEIR NAMELESS WORLD. WITH ONE EXCEPTION. THOUSANDS OF YEARS BEFORE, A MISSION FROM THE HEART STARS FEDERATION HAD COME TO THEIR WORLD AND TRIED TO CIVILIZE THE NEMOTROPIN. THEY HAD BEEN GRANTED THE RIGHT TO SEND ONE OF THEIR NUMBER OFFWORLD. THE MISSION HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING THAT TIME AND RITUAL WOULD ALTER THIS GRANT INTO AN EXCUSE FOR THE NEMOTROPIN TO WEED OUT THOSE EVEN TOO DESPICABLE FOR EXISTENCE IN A SOCIETY OF KILLERS AND REAVERS. THE NEMOTROPIN WERE AT LEAST SANE ENOUGH NEVER TO REVEAL THE NATURE OF THEIR AWFUL Duplicity. AND SO, PERIODICALLY, THEY WOULD HOLD THE CONTEST AND THE WORST OF THEIR NUMBER WOULD SLAUGHTER AND SLAY AND ATTACK EACH OTHER UNTIL ONLY ONE WAS LEFT STANDING. AND HE WOULD BE SENT TO THE SHAPE-CHANGING SATELLITE THE FEDERATION MAINTAINED, AND WOULD BE SENT TO THE PILGRIM PLANET WHERE HE COULD DO NO MORE HARM AMONG THE NEMOTROPIN. AND SO, IRL AND ONKADJ WENT INTO THE TUNNEL OF FINAL DARKNESS WITH THEIR SHELL SHIELDS COVERING THE SOFT VULNERABLE SPOT BENEATH WHICH RESTED THE GLIOMAS OF THEIR BRAINS. IRL WIELDED A PAIR OF CUTTERS, AND A PAIR OF POISON BAGS WERE STRAPPED TO HIS RIGHT SIDE, PROTECTING HIS WOUNDS FROM EARLIER BATTLES. SHOULD ONKADJ STRIKE IN THAT AREA THE BAGS WOULD SPURT POISON AND KILL IRL. ONKADJ WAS THE YOUNGER OF THE COMBATANTS, AND WITHOUT PEER IN THE USE OF THE BROILER SPEAR. HELMETED, THEIR HOOVES COATED WITH RETARDANT TO KEEP THEM FROM SLIPPING ON THE MOSSY STONES OF THE TUNNEL, THEY FACED EACH OTHER AND THE FINAL COMBAT BEGAN. IT RAGED FOR THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS, AND ON THE MORNING OF THE FOURTH DAY, ONKADJ EMERGED WITHOUT ONE OF HIS FOUR ARMS, BUT CARRYING IRL'S LOWER MANDIBLE. HE WAS SENT TO THE SHAPE-CHANGING SATELLITE, MADE MALLEABLE, ALTERED INTO THE FORM OF THE SUPERIOR INDIGENOUS LIFE FORM OF THE HOST PLANET, AND SENT AWAY. ON THE HOST PLANET, ONKADJ DID VERY WELL. IT WAS A VERY DIFFERENT WORLD FROM THAT OF THE NEMOTROPIN, AND ONKADJ FUNCTIONED WELL IN THE BODY. HE BECAME A PROMINENT FIGURE.



THERE IS AN EXPLANATION FOR ATILLA. FOR HAMAN. FOR CORTEZ. FOR CESARE BORJA. FOR CHRISTIE AND SPECK AND MANSON, AND NIXON.... AND TORQUEMADA.... BUT ONLY THE NEMOTROPIN KNOW THE EXPLANATION, AND THEY SMILE AS BEST THEY CAN WITH BLOODY MANDIBLES.



## IS FOR OUROBOROS



BANISHED FROM THE EARTH, THE GREAT WORM COILED EVER SO TIGHTLY AND WENT TO SLEEP. ONE DAY HE WILL AWAKEN. THEN THE MOON WILL WRITHE.

## IS FOR POLTERGEIST

ESSENTIALLY VERY WELL COORDINATED. VERY FEW PEOPLE REMEMBER, BECAUSE OF THE BLACK SOX SCANDAL, BUT IN 1919 THE CHICAGO WHITE SOX CARRIED A PITCHER NAMED FRED MORRIS WHO WON 30 GAMES; PITCHED 7 PERFECT, NO HIT, NO RUN GAMES, STRUCK OUT 25 BATTERS IN ONE CONTEST; AND REPLACED EVERY PILOT IN THE OUTFIELD WITHOUT MOVING FROM THE MOUND. HE PLAYED ONLY ONE SEASON, HIS HEART WAS BROKEN WHEN SHAMELESS JOE JACKSON TURNED UP A CREEP, AND VANISHED FROM WHENCE HE CAME. HE WAS A POLTERGEIST WITH A WHOLE LOT OF LOVE FOR THE SPORT.





## IS FOR QUETZALCOATL

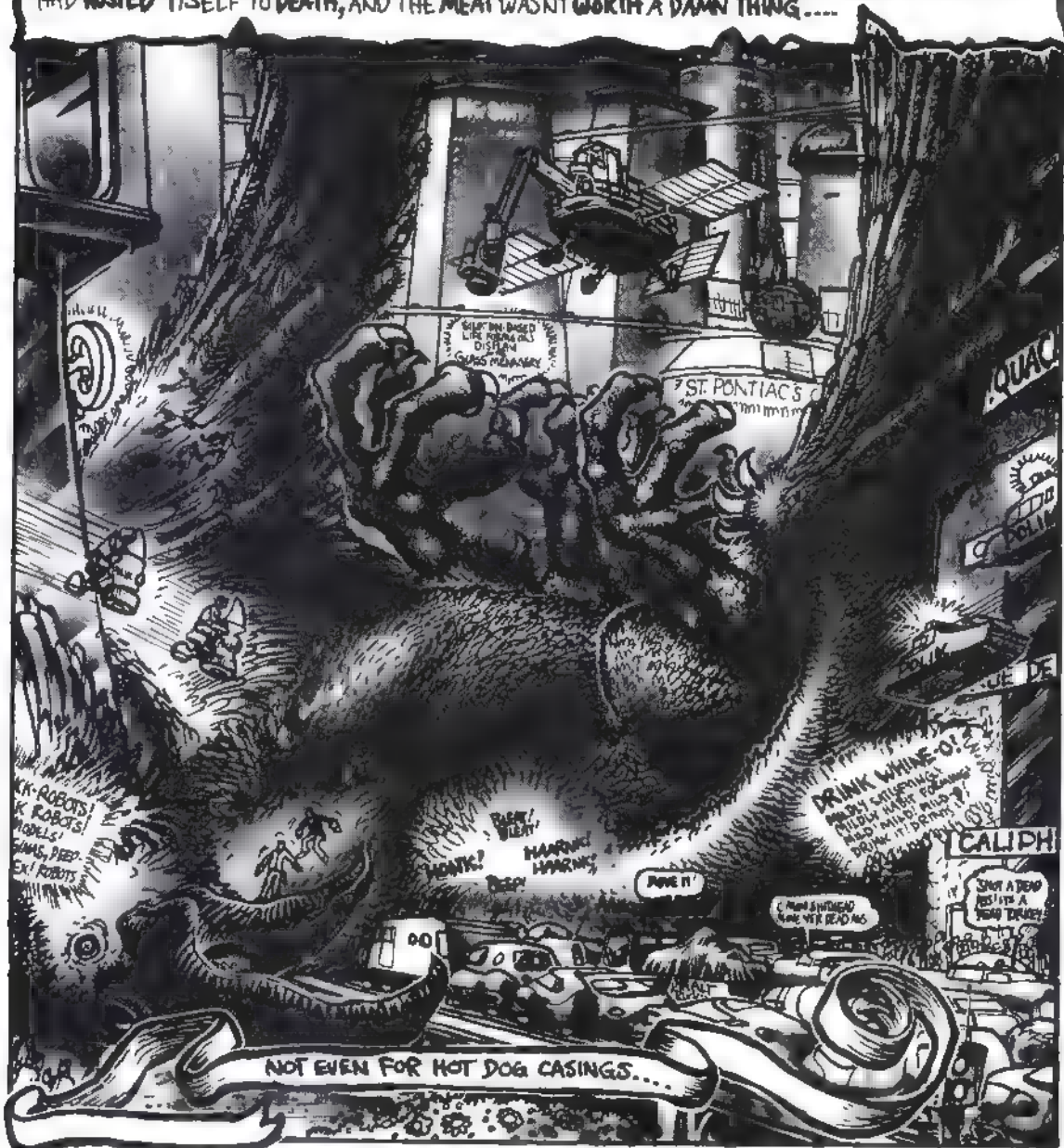
HE DID NOT COME FROM SPACE. HE WAS NOT AN ALIEN. HE DID NOT BUILD TOLTEC OR EVEN AZTEC PYRAMIDS AS LANDING BEACONS FOR FLYING SAUCERS. HIS MOST OBVIOUS BAD HABIT WAS A RATHER NASTY APPETITE FOR FRESHLY-EXCISED, STILL-PULSING HEARTS. IT IS NOT TRUE WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT QUETZALCOATL AND THE VIRGINS. TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT.

ROO IS FOR





THE FLYING CITY OF DETROIT (ITS UP THERE) WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF ITS FOUNDER'S DAY CELEBRATION WHEN THE GREAT GOLDEN ROO CAME TO FEED. IT SETTLED DOWN OVER THE CALIPH'S DOME (WHERE THE ROLLER-DERBY SEMI-FINALS WERE IN PROGRESS) AND THRUST ITS EBONY BEAK THROUGH THE FORMED PLASTIC AND STEEL GURDERING. IT DIPPED AGAIN AND AGAIN, BRINGING UP MASSES OF WRITHING SPECTATORS (AND BUCKER\* RUMPY JOHANSSON), THEIR SCREAMS FEEDING INTO THE P.A. SYSTEM AND CAUSING AN OVERLOAD. THE GREAT BIRD'S APPETITE COULD HARDLY BE SATISFIED WITH A FEW SPORTS FANS, HOWEVER. IT ROSE ON ENORMOUS, BEATING PINIONS, ITS PINK TONGUE VIBRATING AND ITS SHRIEK OF JOY SHATTERING ALL THE FACETS OF THE ESSO TETRAHEDRON. THE ROO'S SHADOW SWAM ACROSS THE GIGANTIC FLYING METROPOLIS AS THE BIRD DOVE ON THE SERVITOR FACTORY. WHAT COULD HAVE MADE IT SEEK OUT SUCH AN INEDIBLE ATTRACTION NO ONE IN DETROIT (OR EVEN BOMBAY, FLOATING OVER THERE A LITTLE WAY OFF) COULDEVER SAY. BUT IT SETTLED AND BEGAN TO EAT THE ENTIRE PLANT, ROBOT PARTS AND ALL. AND WHEN IT HAD FINISHED CONSUMING THE FACTORY, AND THE MILLIONS OF INDIVIDUAL BITS OF INCIPENT ROBOT, IT SLAKED ITS THIRST IN THE CRYSTAL FALLS FOR THE BETTER PART OF A DAY. AND WHEN, HOURS LATER, IT FELL (CRASHING A LOT OF STUFF), AND IT DIED. THE RESIDENTS OF DETROIT WERE STUNNED AND WAXED EXTREMELY WROTH. THE GREAT GOLDEN ROO OF THE SKY HAD RUSTED ITSELF TO DEATH, AND THE MEAT WASN'T WORTH A DAMN THING....





I WAS AN INVITED GUEST AT THE ELEGANT FUND-RAISING PARTY WHERE SOLIFIDIAN PERFORMED HIS MIRACLES. I'D RECEIVED THE ENGRAVED INVITATION TO THE PARTY SEVERAL WEEKS EARLIER, BUT HAD NOT PLANNED TO RSVP, BECAUSE I KNEW THEY'D BE HITTING US UP FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE POLITICAL WAR CHEST OF A CITY COUNCILMAN WHOSE POSITION ON RAPID TRANSIT I CONSIDERED REALLY FUCKED. BUT PENNY GOLDMAN CALLED FIRST AND TRIED TO EMBARRASS ME INTO COMING, AND WHEN THAT DIDN'T WORK, LESLIE PARKISH CALLED AND SAID IT HAD BEEN SO LONG SINCE SHE'D SEEN ME, WHY DIDN'T I COME.



AND I WANTED TO SEE LESLIE AGAIN, SO I WENT. IT WAS HELD AT LARRY NIVEN'S NEW HOME OUT IN TARZANA, AND LARRY AND MARILYN HAD REALLY OUF DONE THEMSELVES IN SETTING UP THE BUFFET AND HIRING THE CATERERS TO ERECT THE BIG PARTY TENT ON THE GROUNDS OUT BACK. THE MINUTE I CAME THROUGH THE DOOR, A COMMITTEE WORKER FOR THE COUNCILMAN HANDED ME A PLEDGE CARD WHICH I PROMPTLY PUT IN MY SIDE JACKET POCKET. I'D PROBABLY GIVE THE SIDB A FEW BUCKS, BUT I'D MAKE DAMNED SURE I SPENT A FEW MINUTES TELLING HIM HOW IF HE DIDN'T GET OFF...

## IS FOR SOLIFIDIAN THE SORCERER

... HIS ASS AND START FORMULATING PLANS FOR A NEW RAPID TRANSIT DISTRICT IN LOS ANGELES HE WAS GOING TO FIND HIMSELF FACING A NEW COMMITTEE... ONE ID FORM TO BEAT HIS BACKSIDE AT ELECTION TIME! SO I WANDERED AROUND AND MADE SMMULTALK WITH PEOPLE I KNEW, AND TRIED TO CORNER LESLIE, WHO WAS BUZZING AROUND DOING ORGANIZATIONAL THINGS; AND FINALLY THE ENTERTAINMENT STARTED IN THE TENT...





GEORGE CARLIN AND RICHARD PRIOR TOOK TURNS RUINING MY MIND, AND THEN THEY GOT TOGETHER AND DID AN AD LIB ROUTINE IN TANDEM, WHICH HAD TO BE THE FUNNIEST THING SINCE ROSS MARTIN DELIVERED THE LINE, "LESLIE THE GREAT ESCAPED WITH A CHICKEN?!" IN THE GREAT RACE. THEN THERE WAS A BREAK WHILE TOM HENSLEY GOT SET UP WITH THE ROTO-ROOTER GOODTIME CHRISTMAS BAND, AND I SAW SOLIFIDIAN FOR THE FIRST TIME. HE LOOKED JUST LIKE MANDRAKE THE MAGICIAN. HE WAS ABOUT 7 FEET TALL, AS THIN AS A WATERGATE ALIBI, HE HAD ONE OF THOSE HAIRLINE MUSTACHES THAT ALWAYS MADE ME THINK OF SIMON LEGREE IN A STAGE PRODUCTION OF UNCLE TOM'S CABIN; AND HE HAD THE SLIMMEST, WHITEST, MOST BEAUTIFUL HANDS I'D EVER SEEN. BRAIN SURGEON FINGERS WITH POLISHED NAILS. HE WORE A TUX AND TAILS AND A TOP HAT. IF I OWNED A DINER, I'D HAVE HIRED HIM ON THE SPOT AS A SANDWICH-BOARD MAN. AND AFTER TOM'S BAND HAD EVERYONE BLOWN AWAY, SOLIFIDIAN WAS INTRODUCED BY THE CANDIDATE HIMSELF AND THE SORCERER ... BECAUSE THAT WAS WHAT HE CLEARLY WAS ... ASKED THE AUDIENCE TO TELL HIM THEIR MOST SECRET DESIRE. NOTHING BIG. JUST SOMETHING THAT WAS PERSONALLY IMPORTANT TO EACH PERSON. AT FIRST, NO ONE WOULD SPEAK UP, BUT FINALLY A WOMAN SAID

I HAVE A VERY PAINFUL, DIFFICULT PERIOD EVERY MONTH. CAN YOU DO ANYTHING ABOUT THAT?



EVERYONE WAS STARTLED, BUT WHEN I REALIZED IT WAS GEORGINA VOSS I SMILED; SHE'D SAY ANYTHING. BUT SOLIFIDIAN DIDN'T SEEM TO THINK IT WAS OUTRAGEOUS, AND HE POINTED A LONG WHITE FINGER AT HER AND SAID "I THINK YOU'LL FIND IT ALL BETTER, NOW." QUERULOUSLY, GEORGINA LOOKED AT HIM, AND THEN A BIG SMILE CAME OVER HER FACE, AND SHE STOOD UP AND SAID "OH, MY GOD" AND, LAUGHING LIKE A LOON, SHE RUSHED OFF INTO LARRY'S HOUSE, PRESUMABLY TO THE BATHROOM, TO CHECK HERSELF. BUT NO ONE IN THE CROWD DOUBTED THAT SOLIFIDIAN HAD REARRANGED HER PARTS SO SHE WASN'T IN PAIN.

SO THEN I SAID "I CAN'T GET A DECENT SHAVE. MY BEARD IS LIKE BARBED WIRE AND MY SKIN IS LIKE A BABY'S INSTEP! WHEN I EVEN USE AN ELECTRIC RAZOR I CUT MYSELF AND GET INGROWN HAIRS AND THEN I LOOK LIKE A 41-YEAR OLD KID WITH ACNE. CAN YOU TAKE CARE OF THAT, SIR?" SOLIFIDIAN NODDED, POINTED A FINGER AT ME, AND, AS EVERYONE GASPED IN AWE (AND NOT A LITTLE HORROR) EVERY FOLLICLE ON MY FACE WORKED ITS WAY OUT OF MY SKIN, CARRYING WITH IT THE ROOT AND WHATEVER IT IS THAT MAKES THE HAIR GROW BACK. IT ALL FELL ON MY JACKET AND I BRUSHED IT OFF AND RUBBED MY JAW. AND I WAS AS SMOOTH AS IF I HAD JUST COME FROM THE BARBER AT THE PLAZA. I LED THE APPLAUSE.



THERE WAS MORE, MUCH MORE. HE PERFORMED A DOZEN SIMILAR MIRACLES IN THE SPACE OF MERE MINUTES. HE GAVE ONE WOMAN A SENSATIONAL NOSE JOB, MADE A TALENT AGENTS

PENIS LARGER, CURED ONE GUY'S COLOR BLINDNESS, GAVE BILL ROTSLER BACK THE SENSE OF SMELL, AND RESTORED HAIR TO THE BALD PATE OF THE CANDIDATE.

HE WAS AMAZING, NEVER SAW ANYTHING LIKE IT! HE WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF PERFORMING A VASECTOMY ON MARTY SHAPIRO WHEN A STOUT WOMAN WEARING AN IMPROBABLE HAT CAME STALKING INTO THE MIDST OF THE CROWD.



SHE STOOD THERE STARING AT HIM WITH HER CHUBBY HANDS ON HER HIPS UNTIL HE WAS FINISHED. AND WHEN HE LOOKED AROUND TO SEE WHO WAS NEXT, HE SAW HER AND HIS FACE FELL.

SO THIS IS WHERE YOU ARE, YOU ASSHOLE!

HE BEGAN TO FUMFUM AND WAVE HIS HANDS AROUND HELPLESSLY...

HARRY SOLIFIDIAN GET YOUR LAZY ASS IN GEAR! THERE'S WORK TO BE DONE AT HOME AND NO TIME FOR YOU TO BE FOOLING AROUND WITH THESE SCHMUCKS! NOW, COME ON!



HE LOOKED SHEEPISH, BUT HE FOLLOWED HER DOGILELY. THEY WALKED THROUGH THE CROWD THAT PARTED FOR THEM WITHOUT A MURMUR, AND IN A MOMENT THEY WERE GONE. AND THAT WAS THAT. YOU KNOW, TO THIS DAY, I'M ALWAYS AMAZED AT THE MAGIC HOLD WOMEN HAVE OVER MEN.

WAND DO YOU THINK DID NOT MARRY?







## IS FOR TROGLODYTE

THEY LIVE UNDER THE CITY DUMP AND THEY CAN EAT ALMOST ANYTHING EXCEPT PLASTIC CONTAINERS. IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE TROGLODYTES, WE'D BE TUCKER-DEEP IN GARBAGE. THERE IS A WHOLE LOT TO BE SAID FOR RETURNABLE GLASS BOTTLES.

HEY, WOT IZZIS? A STEWED PLASTIC BAG? WODDYA THINK US GOYS IS, MABEL, VIET-NAMESE BACTERIA?

SORRY, CHARLIE! IT GETTIN' IN EVERYTHIN' NOWADAYS! PICK IT OUT WITCHER FINGERS IFNS Y'DONT LIKE IT!

UM...G.MME A HOT BUICK PLATE AN' SOME PICKLED RETREADS... AN' A PIECE A' INDUSTRIAL INSULATION CREAMPIE!

SAME OLD SHIT...



# IS FOR UPHIR

DEMON CHEMIST AND DOCTOR, WELL-VERSED IN KNOWLEDGE OF MEDICINAL HERBS, RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HEALTH OF DEMONS. UPHIR RECENTLY HAD A RATHER UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCE. SEMIAZAS, CHIEF OF THE FALLEN ANGELS WITH AZAZEL (NO NEED TO GO INTO THE SUBJECT OF OFFICE POLITICS) CAME DOWN WITH A SERIOUS CHARLEY HORSE IN HIS TAIL. UPHIR WAS CALLED IN, DIAGNOSED THE PROBLEM AND APPLIED THE TRADITIONAL INCANTATIONS AND A POUltICE OF MOLE PAWS AND LIVERWORT. JUST TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE, HE GAVE SEMIAZAS A SHOT OF PENICILLIN. NOW WAS HE TO KNOW THE DEMON WAS ALLERGIC TO MOLE PAWS AN UNLOVELY REACTION, MADE EVEN WORSE BY THE PENICILLIN. WITHOUT VOLITION, SEMIAZAS BEGAN TO MAKE IT SNOW IN HELL. INSTANTLY, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF FOOLISH PROMISES, IDLE BOASTS, DIRE THREATS, AND CONTRACTS SATAN HAD MADE CONTAINING THE PHRASE "IT'LL BE A COLD DAY IN HELL" (ON WHICH HE THOUGHT HE'D NEVER HAVE TO DELIVER) CAME TRUE. UPHIR WAS PUNISHED BY BEING SUBMERGED TO HIS NOSE IN A LAKE OF MONKEY VOMIT, WHILE A SQUAD OF WPS RACED MOTORBOATS AROUND HIM, MAKING WAVES. CALIFORNIA IS NOT THE ONLY PLACE WHERE IT'S DIFFICULT TO GET MALPRACTICE INSURANCE.





COUNT CARLO SZIPESTI, A VORWALAKA, A VAMPIRE, HAVING LONG SINCE GROWN WEARY OF STALKING ALLEYWAYS AND SUFFERING THE VICISSITUDES OF FINDING MEALS IN THE STREETS, HIED HIMSELF TO A COMMUNE IN UPSTATE NEW YORK, WHERE, WITH HIS BEARD, HIS ACCENT AND HIS PECULIAR NOCTURNAL HABITS, HE FIT RIGHT IN WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAD JOINED TOGETHER FOR A RETURN TO THE LAND. FOR THE COUNT, IT WAS A GUARANTEED FOUNTAIN OF GOOD HEALTHY BLOOD.



THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNE WERE VERY BIG ON BEAN SPROUTS AND HULLED SUNFLOWER SEEDS. THEY WERE ALL TANNED FROM WORKING IN THE FIELDS AND THE BLOOD RAN HOT AND VIBRANT IN THEIR VEINS. WHEN THE COUNT WAS FOUND DEAD, THE CORONER'S INQUEST DID NOT REVEAL THAT HE HAD BEEN A CREATURE OF DARKNESS, ONE OF THE DREAD VAMPIRES OF THE OLD COUNTRY; WHAT IT DID REVEAL WAS THAT HE HAD DIED FROM SERUM HEPATITIS. AS THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HAS OFTEN POINTED OUT, HEALTH IS INEXTRICABLY INVOLVED WITH MORALITY.

## IS FOR VORWALAKA



YEAH, WELL, SEE, WE KICKED SMILEY OUT 'COZ 'A TH' NEEDLES AN' WELL, SMILEY MUSTA GIVEN IT YA CARLO, BUT WE NEVER AST HOW 'COZ WE MADE SUCH A STINK ABOUT SMILEY, AN' WE SAID "CARLO, YA GOTTA GET THAT TREATED" AN' HE SAID "HO-HO-HO-IT CANNOT KILL ME!" Y' KNOW MAN? WHAT Y' GONNA DO BOUT A POOL?

I KNOW... Y' WANNA SIGN THIS RELEASE?

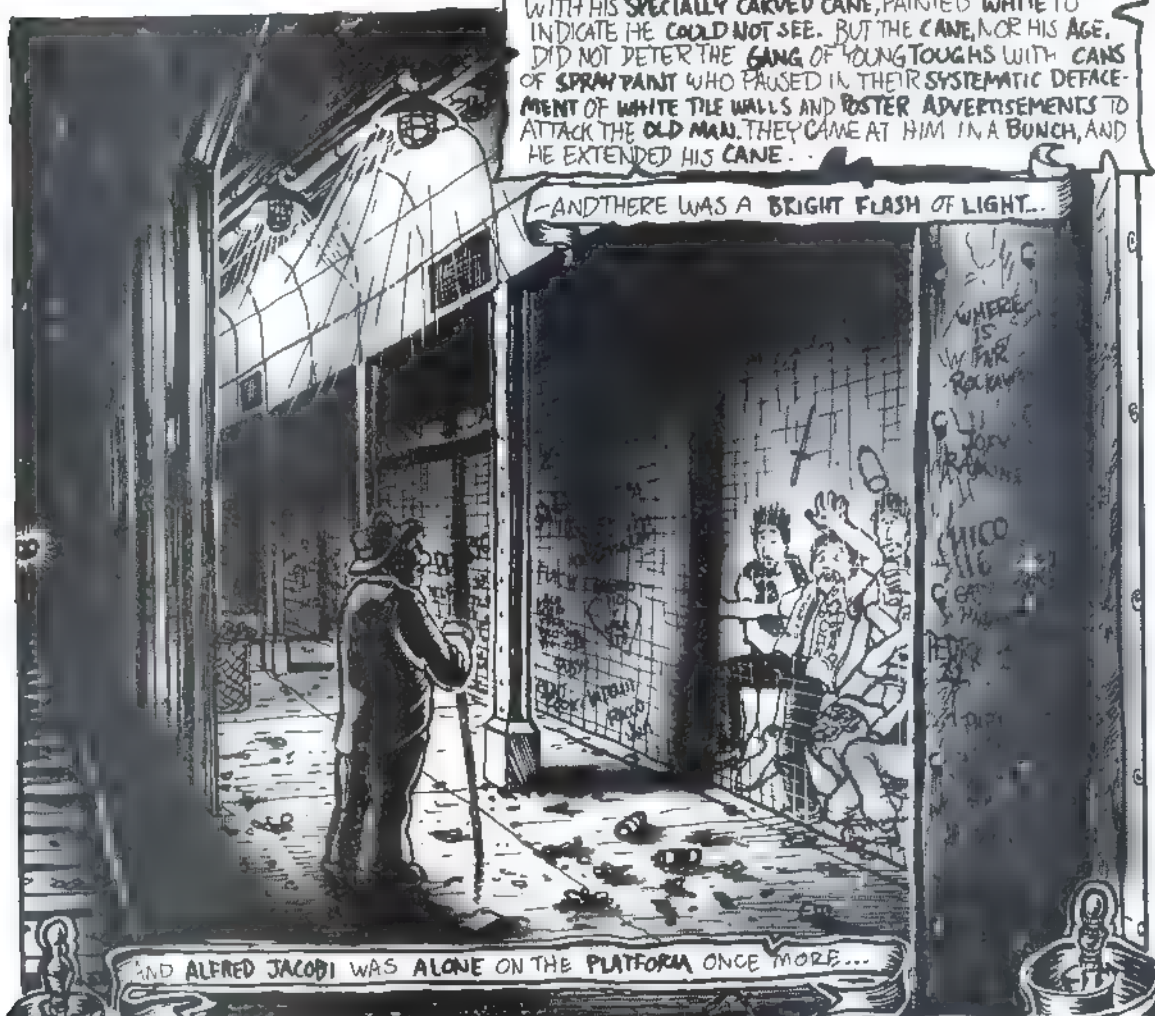
RELEASE? GEE, WE GONNA HAF TA MAKE A COLLECTIVE DECISION BOUT THAT....



# IS FOR WAND OF JACOB

ALFRED JACOBI, SEVENTY-TWO YEARS OLD AND NEARLY BLIND, WAS ACCOSTED AT ONE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING ON THE SHERIDAN SQUARE STATION PLATFORM OF THE 1RT SUBWAY. HIS GRANDCHILDREN, EMILY AND FOSTER AND HERSCH, HAD BEEN TELLING ALFRED FOR YEARS: WHY DO YOU GO OUT WALKING IN THIS AWFUL CITY LATE AT NIGHT? YOU'LL BE MOGGED, KILLED! WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU? BUT ALFRED JACOBI HAD LIVED IN NEW YORK FOR 60 OF HIS 72 YEARS, AND HE BELIEVED IN THE G-D OF HIS FOREFATHERS, AND - MIRACULOUSLY IT SEEMED - HE HAD NEVER SUFFERED EVEN A MOMENT'S UNPLEASANTNESS IN THE STREETS. EVEN THOUGH NEW YORK HAD BECOME A PROWLING GROUND FOR THE MOST DETESTABLE HUMAN PREDATORS URBAN AMERICA HAD EVER PRODUCED, ALFRED JACOBI WAS ABLE TO WALK WHERE HE WISHED, EVEN IN CENTRAL PARK AT MIDNIGHT, TAPPING HIS WAY GENTLY WITH HIS SPECIALLY CARVED CANE, PAINTED WHITE TO INDICATE HE COULD NOT SEE. BUT THE CANE, NOR HIS AGE, DID NOT DETER THE GANG OF YOUNG TOUGHS WITH CANS OF SPRAY PAINT WHO PAUSED IN THEIR SYSTEMATIC DETACEMENT OF WHITE TILE WALLS AND POSTER ADVERTISEMENTS TO ATTACK THE OLD MAN. THEY CAME AT HIM IN A BUNCH, AND HE EXTENDED HIS CANE.

-AND THERE WAS A BRIGHT FLASH OF LIGHT..



AND ALFRED JACOBI WAS ALONE ON THE PLATFORM ONCE MORE...

THE WAND OF JACOB, THE STICK WHICH PRECEDED THE MAGIC WAND, THAT FORCES SPIRITS TO APPEAR, OR REPULSES THEM, AS DID MOSES' ROD, HIS WAND OF JACOB WAS STILL FULLY CHARGED. IF ONE VENTURES DOWN INTO THE SHERIDAN SQUARE STOP ON THE 1RT, ONE CAN SEE A MOST REMARKABLE EXAMPLE OF NATIVE ARTWORK. IT IS A FRIEZE APPARENTLY RENDERED BY AN INSANE URBAN MICHAELANGELO, IN SPOTTY PAINT, MANY COLORS, EXTREMELY LIFELIKE OF A GANG OF YOUNG MEN, SCREAMING IN HORROR. IT'S A REFRESHING BREAK FROM ALL THE OBSCENITIES AND SELF-ADVERTISEMENTS FOR CHICOLIC ONE FINDS IN THE NEW YORK SUBWAY SYSTEM.



HA HA!  
HO HO HO!  
HEE HEE!

IS FOR XAPHAN



DEMON OF THE 2ND ORDER. AT THE TIME OF THE REBELLION OF THE ANGELS, HE PROPOSED THAT THE HEAVENS BE SET ON FIRE. FOR HIS PERFDY HE HAS FOREVERMORE STOKED THE FURNACES OF HELL. IT IS NEVER GOOD TO HAVE DISSATISFIED HELP WORKING IN ONE'S COMPANY. XAPHAN IS STEADILY OVERLOADING THE BOILERS. PAY ATTENTION TO STORIES ABOUT MELTING POLAR ICE-CAPS. XAPHAN IS PROGRAMMING FOR ARMAGEDDON, AND THERE'S NOT A DAMN THING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT.

OLE MAN IS  
SURE  
RAISING  
HELL TONIGHT!

YOU BET!  
HE HEARD  
CALIFORNIA'S  
BUILDING  
16 NEW  
NUCLEAR  
PLANTS!



# IS FOR YGGDRASIL

THE LEGENDARY NORDIC ASH TREE WITH ITS 3 ROOTS EXTENDING INTO THE LANDS OF MORTALS, OF GIANTS, AND NIFLHEIM, THE LAND OF MIST, GROWS IN WISCONSIN. LEGEND HAS IT THAT WHEN THE TREE FALLS, THE UNIVERSE WILL FALL. NEXT WEDNESDAY, THE STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSION COMES THROUGH THAT EMPTY PASTURE WITH A FREEWAY....





# IS FOR ZOMBIE

HOWARD HUGHES DID NOT DIE IN 1976, NO MATTER WHAT THEY TELL YOU. HOWARD HUGHES DIED IN 1968. IT WAS NOT A SPECTACULAR DEATH, DOWN IN FLAMES IN THE SPRUCE GOOSE, OR ASSASSINATED BY HIS NEXT-IN-COMMAND, OR FRIGHTENED TO DEATH BY AN INSECT THAT FOUND ITS WAY INTO HIS EYRIE. HE CHOKED TO DEATH ON A McDONALD'S GREASEBURGER DURING DINNER ONE NIGHT IN JULY OF 1968. BUT WEALTH HAS ITS PRIVILEGES: JOHN HOPKINS AND THE MAYO CLINIC AND THE WALTER REED IN MARYLAND SENT THEIR TEAMS, BUT HE WAS DEAD. DOA, LAS VEGAS. AND HE WAS BURIED, NOT IN 1976, BUT IN 1968. AND MAMA LEGBA, WITH WHOM HUGHES HAD MADE A DEAL 20 YEARS EARLIER IN HAITI, CAME TO THE GRAVE, AND SHE RAISED HIM. THE CORPORATE ENTITY IS MIGHTIER THAN DEATH. BUT THE END IS NEAR: AT THIS VERY MOMENT, TRAINING IN THE SIERRA MAESTRA, IS AN ATTACK SQUAD OF FIDEL CASTRO'S FINEST GUERRILLAS. THEY KNOW WHERE HUGHES WENT WHEN HE EVACUATED NICARAGUA ONE WEEK BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE (ZOMBIES HAVE PRECOGNITIVE FACULTIES, DID YOU KNOW THAT?) AND THEY KNOW THE 1976 DEATH STORY IS MERELY MISDIRECTION, LIKE ALL THE OTHER DEATH RUMORS THROUGHOUT THE PRECEDING YEARS. THEY WILL SEEK HIM OUT AND PUT HIM TO FINAL REST BY THE ONLY MEANS EVER DISCOVERED FOR DEANIMATING: THE WALKING DEAD THEY WILL POUR SAND IN HIS EYES, STUFF A DEAD CHICKEN IN HIS MOUTH, AND SEW UP THE MOUTH WITH SAIL CLOTH TWINE. IT WOULD TAKE A MISSION THIS UNFORTUNATE TO GET THE FIERCE CUBAN FIGHTERS TO SUFFER ALL THE RIDICULE: BAYONET PRACTICE WITH DEAD CHICKENS IS TERRIBLY DEMEANING.....



\* ARTIST'S NOTE: THIS MAY BE WHY HE HATED PILES SO; PILES LAY EGGS IN ANY CARRION, WHETHER DEAD & SINKING OR UNDEAD & STILL THINKING.....



BACK TO LARRY AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE FOR REPAIR. I TOOK THE NOW WATERLOGGED AND FURLED PAINTING WITH ME TO THE STORE, CLIMBED UP IN THE FRONT WINDOW, AND STARED AT THE TWO ALIEN CREATURES HAVING A DUEL. THAT WAS WHAT 2 NEMOTROPIN WAS... A PAIR OF LOBSTERLIKE ALIENS BANGING AWAY AT EACH OTHER. I KNEW THAT WOULD BE TUESDAY'S STORY, BUT I HAD NO IDEA WHAT IT WOULD BE. I SAT FOR AN HOUR AND A HALF BEFORE THE IDEA CAME TO ME THAT I COULDN'T THINK OF AN 8 PAGE STORY THAT COULD BE VISUALLY ADAPTED TO AN U.G. COMIKBOOK, THAT WOULD ALSO HOLD TOGETHER AS A PUBLISHABLE STORY, WRITTEN AROUND THAT DAMNED COVER (WHICH I WAS NOW COMING TO DESPISE). SUDDENLY, I REMEMBERED THAT TITLE "THE CHOCOLATE ALPHABET". I HAVE NO IDEA WHY IT CAME TO ME JUST THEN. BUT IT DID. AND I KNEW INSTANTLY THAT THOUGH I COULDN'T WRITE A LONG STORY ABOUT THOSE WARRING ALIENS, I COULD DO A SORT OF FREDRIC BROWN SHORT-SHORT, A PASTICHE. AND THEN I CARRIED THE THOUGHT A LITTLE FURTHER, AND THOUGHT WHY NOT 26 PASTICHES? AND I TYPED ON THE COVER SHEET OF THE MANUSCRIPT "FROM A TO Z IN THE CHOCOLATE ALPHABET". SADLY, THE IDEA WAS TOO BIG FOR ONE DAY. I WAS SCHEDULED TO SIT IN THE HOBBITS WINDOW FROM 10:30 AM WHEN THE STORE OPENS, TILL 5:00 WHEN SHERRY GOTTIEB GOES OFF DUTY. (THOUGH THE STORE STAYS OPEN TILL 9:00) I WROTE ALL THAT DAY, AND BY 5:00 I WAS UP TO H. SHERRY WENT HOME. I KEPT ON WRITING. BY 11:00 THAT NIGHT, WITH THE COPS CRUISING PAST AND SHINING THEIR SPOTS INTO THE WINDOW TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THAT IDIOT WAS DOING IN THERE, I WAS UP TO R. I COULDN'T KEEP MY EYES OPEN. MY BACK WAS BREAKING. CRAMPED IN THAT DAMNED WINDOW. I WAS SPACING OUT. A DAY OF HAVING PEDES- TRIANS GAWKING, OF CUSTOMERS BUGGING ME WHEN I WANTED TO WRITE, OF HAVING TO THINK OF A COMPLETE STORY FOR EACH LETTER OF THE ALPHABET, HAD TAKEN ITS TOLL. I CRAPPED OUT AND WENT HOME. I WORKED ON ANOTHER PROJECT I HAD IN MY TYPEWRITER IN THE OFFICE, A FANTASY FILM SCRIPT FOR ABC-TV, AND FINALLY GOT TO BED ABOUT 2:30 AM. I GOT UP AT 8:00 THE NEXT MORNING, WENT BACK TO THE TYPEWRITER TO WORK ON THE SCRIPT, AND ABOUT 9:30, WHEN I SHOULD HAVE GONE IN TO TAKE MY SHOWER AND GET READY TO GO TO THE STORE, I SUDDENLY THOUGHT OF WHAT S SHOULD BE. I DIDN'T GET INTO THE HOBBIT TILL 11:30, BUT I WAS ON U AT THAT POINT. I FINISHED THE STORY ON WEDNESDAY THE 25TH OF FEBRUARY, A LITTLE AFTER 1:30 PM, AND SENT IT OFF THAT NIGHT TO ED FERMAN FOR PUBLICATION IN F&SF. AS WELL AS COPIES TO LARRY TODD AND RON TURNER, FOR TRANSLATION INTO A COMIK BOOK. INSTEAD OF GIVING LARRY A STORY, I'D GIVEN HIM THE CRAZY PROBLEM OF ILLUSTRATING 26 STORIES. AND THAT, PECULIAR AS IT MAY SEEM, IS HOW THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN.

## AND A SHORT AFTERWORD FROM THE ILLUSTRATOR

EVERY FUNNYBOOK ARTIST HAS HAD ONE OF THOSE ETERNAL DAYS WHEN S/HE DREW 2 PAGES. NOT 2 PANELS, BUT 2 PAGES, LEADING THEM TO BELIEVE THAT THERE IS NO REASON WHY A 32-PAGE + COVERS FUNNYBOOK CANNOT BE COMPLETED IN 30 DAYS. INDEED, THIS MIGHT BE SO, IF IT WERE TRUE. SOME PEOPLE CAN DO IT. MOST DON'T. I DIDN'T. HARLAN, RON & I FIRST DISCUSSED "C.A." IN 1972. 1978 & FINALLY HERE IT IS. HARLAN REMARKED THAT IT WAS THE ONLY BOOK HE'D EVER BEEN PAID COMPLETELY FOR 2 YEARS BEFORE IT WAS PUBLISHED, AND THAT WAS A YEAR AGO. ANYHOW, I FINALLY GOT ONTO IT AND SO HERE IT IS.

AS TO AUTHORSHIP, HARLAN WROTE ALL THE ALPHABET CAPTIONS & ALMOST ALL THE BALLOONS IN "S IS FOR SOULFIDIAN" BUT, ALL OTHER BALLOONS ARE OF TODD AUTHORSHIP, AS EMBELLISHMENTS OR SOME DAMNTHING... THE SAME GOES FOR THE EDITORIAL CHOICE OF LETTERING WEIGHT-WHICH WORDS I CHOSE TO PLACE EMPHASIS UPON. THE FUNCTION OF THE WORD-EMPHASIS IS TO AID IN OUT-LOUD READING, AS ALMOST ALL OF MY WRITING IS IN THE FORM OF DIALOGUE, AS IN A PLAY (WHERE NARRATIVE IS SELDOM EMPLOYED-YOU SEE WHAT WOULD BE DESCRIBED) SO I IMPOSED MY SENSE OF ITALICS ON HARLAN'S TEXT. THIS, OF COURSE, DOES NOT APPLY TO THIS FOREWORD, AS MY RAPIDOGRAPH WAS GIVING ME TROUBLE ALL THIS PAST WEEK. I THINK THAT COVERS EVERYTHING.

—Larry Todd JUNE 20, 1978









**HOO HOO**

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